

DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICES

Business Meeting Minutes December 2-3, 2010

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) held a full committee meeting on December 2-3, 2010, at the Marriott Residence Inn, Pentagon City, 550 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia.

December 2, 2010

The meeting was opened by Col Fraser Darling, the Designated Federal Officer stating that DACOWITS is governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) regulations and as such is open to the public, that the public may submit comments for the record, and that these comments will be submitted for inclusion with the minutes.

The DACOWITS Chair, LTG Claudia Kennedy (Ret, USA) welcomed the Committee members, military liaison officers and members of the public. She stated the purpose of this meeting was to receive briefings on pending topics/questions the Committee requested from the Services earlier in the fall; to formulate and vote on 2010 recommendations; and to explore potential topics/issues the Committee will address during 2011.

Both the Wellness and Assignment Sub-Committee Chairs gave an overview of this year's work, as follows:

Wellness Subcommittee

Col Phil Torres (Ret, USMC), Chair, opened by stating the wellness of all service members directly affects readiness and retention. The Subcommittee is looking at uniform and equipment issues because all service members need properly fitting uniforms and are less likely to use protective equipment that is uncomfortable or fits poorly and inhibits robust physical performance. In particular, the Subcommittee is following up on the 2009 DACOWITS recommendations regarding uniform and equipment issues for women, as well as some of the other recommendations related to wellness. Additionally, the Subcommittee is interested in obtaining more gender specific information on how PTSD symptoms, treatment, and recovery differ for men and women. Finally, the Subcommittee has requested a follow up from the services on the DACOWITS 2007 recommendations concerning pre- and post-deployment health care for women. This follow-up is due on 14 February 2011.

Assignment Subcommittee

BG Maureen LeBoeuf (Ret, USA), Chair, stated that the Subcommittee is seeking clarification of the reason certain military occupational specialties remain closed to women despite their current active combat role in combat theaters. In the 2009 DACOWITS report, the Committee

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recommended that the combat exclusion for women be evaluated and changed to reflect current experiences and modern warfare. The Assignment Subcommittee requested a briefing from the services on the status of this recommendation, particularly from the Army, which had been slated to release a combat policy review in the fall of 2010. The Subcommittee also asked the services whether, if DoD were to eliminate its 1994 combat exclusion policy, how this would be implemented by the services.

Information Briefing

- Mr Keith Stabler, Chief, Judicial and Advisory Review, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), gave a briefing on combat and non-combat Veteran benefits.
 - He presented a description of the compensation program, the impact of an injury/illness in combat and the proof that is required for each of the VA's findings of disability. There was discussion of the fact that women could find themselves lacking the required documentation to substantiate combat injury due to the current ground combat exclusion policies. Mr. Stabler said that if there is some ambiguity as to whether an injury occurred during combat or not, VA conducts an investigation into the combat engagement. A VA claims court ultimately rules on the definition of engaged in combat.
 - The VA's goal is to have all disability claims processed in under 180 days. Currently, the average time to process a claim is 168 days. An investigation may prolong claim adjudication time.

Responses to DACOWITS 2009 Report and Committee Questions

Military Personnel Policy (MPP), each service, the US Coast Guard, and the National Guard Bureau presented their responses to the 2009 DACOWITS recommendations.

- **Military Personnel Policy (MPP)**
 - Current policy allows for flexibility to accommodate the unique circumstances under which women are involved in combat and DoD is not currently planning a change its 1994 assignment policy. Additionally, policy change is a process that is sufficiently complex to make it difficult to assign a timeline.
- **Service Responses to DACOWITS 2009 Report and Committee Questions**

The Service Liaison Officers briefed their respective service responses with regard to:

 - Combat preparedness of women service members to include: proficiency in individual weapons prior to deployment, sufficiency in size and quantities of field equipment and organizational clothing.
 - Strategic communications plans that highlight women's combat contributions and
 - How the roles that women are currently assuming in combat affect future assignment policies for women.

Specific responses can be found on the DACOWITS web site under the Reports Tab, 2009 Annual Report.

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Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) Briefing

- Dr. Kay Whitley, SAPRO Director, and Ms. Darlene Sullivan briefed the DoD response to the recommendations of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services. The Task Force made 91 recommendations to the Secretary of Defense in these areas: strategic direction, prevention and training, response to victims and accountability. DoD agrees with some but not all of the recommendations.

Recognition of BG Pat Foote (Ret, USA)

The Committee recognized the significant impact of the service and career of BG Pat Foote, with each member recollecting when she or he first met BG Foote and commenting on her specific achievements during her Army career.

Public Open Forum

- **The Alliance for National Defense:** BG Pat Foote (Ret, USA) spoke on behalf of the Alliance, whose purpose is to educate the public on women in the military and advocate on behalf of military women. She expressed concern in three areas: assignments based on gender; sexual assault/harassment, and women's access to appropriate OB/GYN and other reproductive health care.
- **Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR):** Ms. Marie Manteuffel, explained that SWHR, whose work is not focused exclusively on military members, is engaged in educating the public about gender-based differences between men's and women's medical needs. She advocated for increased funding for gender-based research in this area. SWHR's current area of major focus is identifying, diagnosing and treating women suffering from PTSD.
- **Grace After Fire:** CAPT Amy Lindberg MSC, USNR stated that the goals of this organization are to provide a national online social medium for women veterans, where they can share their stories and experiences and, in doing so, discover resources that will help them recover from sexual trauma, PTSD and unhealthy behaviors/addictions/life style choices. They offer peer support to women in accessing Veterans Affairs Health Services, community resources and mental health providers.
- **Service Women's Action Network (SWAN):** Ms. Anu Bhagwati, Executive Director, briefed that SWAN's top two issues are military sexual trauma reform and the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell," a policy that disproportionately affects women.
- **Women's Research and Education Institute (WREI):** CAPT Lory Manning, (Ret, USN) explained that WREI has been looking at military women's policy issues for 15 years and is the go-to resource on data concerning women in the military. WREI is in the process of publishing its seventh volume of "Women in the Military" which provides historical and other data on women in the military.

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- **USN, Office of Women's Policy:** LCDR Jeanne Sullivan extended an invitation to the audience to attend the USN-sponsored Joint Leadership Symposium, the largest annual gathering of women in uniform. It will take place during March 2011 in San Diego.

The public-portion of the meeting was adjourned.

Committee members held an administrative meeting to receive briefings on various administrative matters.

Committee members held an administrative meeting to discuss the next meeting dates, proposed installation visits, and ideas for commemorating the 60th anniversary of DACOWITS. The Sub-committees then broke off for individual discussions.

December 3, 2010

The meeting was opened by Col Fraser Darling and LTG Kennedy. New attendees introduced themselves and Col Fraser Darling gave a brief explanation of the business of the day, starting with service-specific overviews of the Career Intermission Pilot Program.

Career Intermission Pilot Program Service Overview (CIPP)

The CIPP was approved in the FY2009 National Defense Authorization Act, which authorized each service secretary to create a pilot program to allow officers and enlisted members to voluntarily and temporarily leave active duty for an intermission period. The focus of the program is on helping service members achieve better work/life balance and the goal is to use the program as a retention tool for mid-level service members who, without this program option, might permanently leave active duty.

- **Navy**
This is the most mature of the service programs, in that it has been in existence for the longest time. Fifteen applicants have been selected for the program, of which nine are currently actively in the program. Reasons for an intermission period cover a variety of life's challenges, such as: in-vitro fertilization (IVF) support; exceptional family member issues; elder care support; education sabbaticals; and humanitarian work. Members are paid a small monthly stipend (1/15th of basic pay) and must associate with the Independent Ready Reserve (IRR) during their break in service.
- **Coast Guard**
Coast Guard has two existing sabbatical programs, which differ in several respects from the DoD programs. The first, known as the Care for Newborn Children (CNC) was developed in 1990 to alleviate excessive personal family hardships associated with parental responsibilities for a newborn child. In 2000, to give careerists a chance to pursue opportunities outside the service, the Temporary Separation program (TEMP

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SEP) was adopted. Individuals in this program are not paid any stipend and can completely separate from Service temporarily with no benefits. There is no obligation to affiliate with the Reserves.

- **Air Force**
When the program is implemented, airmen will be able to apply for a one- to three-year period. Airmen will accrue a two-month active duty obligation for every one month in the program. Air Force occupational specialty needs will be taken into consideration by the Air Force Personnel Center in selecting airmen for the program. The AF approved the program in June 2010 and is currently working towards implementation.
- **Marine Corps**
The Marine Corps has not instituted this program because it is not experiencing retention problems. It will reexamine it if retention becomes a concern.
- **Army**
Army does not have a program. The Army Director of Military Personnel Management is coordinating with key leaders to obtain data and address the impact of potential implementation.
- **National Guard Bureau**
The National Guard believes there is sufficient flexibility built into Active Guard Reserve (AGR), because its members are citizen soldiers and there are already regulatory and administrative procedures for AGR soldiers to transition in and out of AGR status when appropriate.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Challenges Unique to Women Service Members

Dr. Colanda Cato, PhD, OSD Health Affairs, Program Manager for Interpersonal Violence, Resilience and Prevention Directorate, stated that research studies suggest that OIF/OEF women have greater rates of PTSD and depression than OIF/OEF men, but that more research is needed to determine the cause. In particular, more must be done to identify disparities, specific needs and opportunities for improving both treatment and preventive services. The Integrated Mental Health Strategy (IMHS) is a joint DoD/VA project aimed at examining potential gender-specific needs and identifying gaps in services and methods to address these needs.

2010 DACOWITS Recommendations

The Committee members discussed, voted and unanimously approved the following recommendations for 2010:

1. DoD should eliminate the 1994 Assignment Rule and direct the services to eliminate their respective assignment rules, thereby ending gender-based restrictions on military assignments. Concurrently, DoD and the services should open all related career fields

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and specialties, schooling and training opportunities that have been closed to women as a result of the DoD Assignment Rule and service assignment rules.

2. DoD and the services should ensure the timely development and delivery of properly designed combat-related equipment for women, such as flak jackets, by the end of 2011.
3. DoD and the services should redesign the flight suit for proper fit and function for women and men.
4. DoD and the services should examine and identify gender-specific aspects and disparities related to PTSD, and where appropriate, develop and implement targeted and accessible treatment programs.

Possible DACOWITS Study Topics for 2011

The Committee concluded the meeting by discussing possible study topics, all of which were referred to the Subcommittees to assist them in choosing two to three issues to focus on in 2011:

- The proper design and fit for women and men of the utility uniform
- Continued examination of the research on the gender-specific aspects of PTSD diagnosis and treatment, to include addressing the concern that women's PTSD symptoms are often misdiagnosed due to co-morbidity with other illnesses such as depression.
- Examination of ways to implement the Committee's 2010 recommended assignments policy, including review of the progress and current status of women's integration into submarine service.
- The need to attract and retain the next generation of women service members, including exploration of the attributes and values of the younger women who will be entering the work force between 2015 and 2025.
- Access to free-standing, on-base health clinics for women and provisions for privacy/confidentiality in military hospitals and clinics.
- Utilization of TRS (TriCare Reserve Select) for the Reserve component and access to health care generally for women Reservists and National Guard members.
- Access to medical care and quality of life programs by women at joint bases.
- Access to the full range of women's health care services, including pregnancy and other reproductive health care needs.

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- Pregnancy policies at the military academies and how and why they differ from the pregnancy policies of the services.

ICF staff proposed a plan to execute the 2011 study topics, elaborating on a detailed timeline proposal. Taking this timeline into account, the Committee generally agreed on its 2011 timeline, which will be fleshed out and provided in writing to all members and ICF in early December.

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned.

Committee members held an administrative meeting to receive briefings on various administrative matters.

Meeting was adjourned.



Report Submitted by
Col Adrienne Fraser Darling, USMC
Military Director, DACOWITS



Report Certified by
LTG Claudia J. Kennedy, Ret, USA
DACOWITS Chair

Enclosures as stated

DACOWITS MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE

Committee Members Present

LTG(Ret) Claudia Kennedy
COL(Ret) Margarethe Cammermeyer
Ms. Nancy Duff Campbell
BG(Ret) Julia Cleckley
The Honorable Ruby DeMesme
SgtMaj MC(Ret) John Estrada
The Honorable Debbie James
BG(Ret) Maureen LeBoeuf
Col(Ret) Phil Torres

Members Absent

CSM(Ret) Roberta Santiago

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